

Galatians

Bible Commentary 2021

by

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One Gospel - Galatians 1

1:1

Paul was an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. He became an apostle by God's will. Paul did not become an apostle because he said he was or because other men said he was. He became an apostle when the Lord Jesus Christ called him.

Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul, was on his way to Damascus to kill Christians. He already killed Christians or put them in prison. He was there when Stephen was martyred and approved of that murder. What kind of man was this? He was a killer. He was a religious fanatic. When confronted by the Lord Jesus he went from being a killer to an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing is impossible with God. We should never write off anybody.

What is an apostle? The word means messenger. It is someone set aside for the purpose of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. When Paul defended himself against his critics at Corinth he listed some of the credentials of an apostle. Read 2 Corinthians 12:12.

A biblical apostle has a ministry associated with supernatural acts from God. This should not surprise us. How supernatural was it for God to raise his son Jesus Christ from the dead? If you can believe this then you should be able to believe everything else in the Bible.

Paul did not become an apostle by the authority of man. This should cause us to consider how men are called to ministry. God did not call Paul to the ministry because he was educated. Paul wrote in his letters that he counted everything as rubbish compared to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. This was not book knowledge. Paul described experiential knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew Jesus as a real person. He knew him because God spoke to him. God called him by name.

This is what we need. We need men who hear from God and who were put in ministry by God instead of man.

It is important to keep in mind the source of Paul's authority. Paul gave his credentials up front for a purpose. He did this because the Galatians needed to take him serious. They were in big trouble

because false apostles came in and turned them away from the gospel of Jesus Christ. They needed to believe Paul was a man of God with a message from God.

People need to know those who preach God's word are men of God. Those who preach the gospel need to act like it. They need to live godly lives of humility, sacrifice, and obedience. We need to cut the legs out from under the false preachers in mega churches. We need to live a holy, humble, pure life which is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. We need an anointing which will produce the fear of God in those we preach to. Our lives should radiate the fear of God so men will surrender to the gospel.

1:2-3

Paul was not alone in ministry. He had a team who worked with him. This team provided a network of material resources and prayer support. Paul mentioned people on his team by name but here we get a mention of "all the brethren which are with me". Paul was not alone in spreading the gospel. We should not be alone either. The Lord chose twelve disciples. Paul worked with a team. The Lord sent his disciples to preach two by two. What do we learn from this?

Ministry is not a one man show. Develop a mindset of working with people. We are not independent in our work and our work is not just for individuals. We are called to edify, exhort, and comfort the church. The church is not just one individual. The church is many people who agree that Jesus Christ died on the cross for their sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. This gospel is true whether or not anyone believes it, but those who do believe comprise the church. These are the people we walk with and serve.

Paul extended grace and peace to the Galatians. Grace is a term borrowed from Greeks. Peace is a distinctly Jewish word. Paul used the words grace and peace and by this we understand the church is Jews and Gentile together in Christ. The church is not only made up of former Gentiles, but also includes Jewish people. The church is Jew and Gentile. The Bible came from the pen of Jewish writers. How could anyone say that God was finished with Jewish people? If God is finished with the Jew then what assurance do we have that a day may come when he is done with Christians?

God's people are three in one, like God himself. God's people are Israel, the church, and the nations in the kingdom. In each God called a remnant to comprise his spiritual people. These are the people who believe in the seed of the woman, the Messiah who crushed the head of the serpent.

1:4-5

Jesus gave himself for our sins. John the Baptist pointed at the Lord Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." John saw the sacrifice of the lamb was not only for Israel but for everyone who believed in the seed of the woman who crushes the head of the serpent. Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He was buried, and then he rose again on the third day.

Why did Jesus die on the cross and rise again? He told his disciples as he went to the cross to be of good cheer because he overcame the world. What does it mean that Jesus overcame the world? What does it mean *"that he might deliver us from this present evil world"*? What is the world?

Comparing one scripture to another I understand that the "world" is a system which is independent and opposed to God. It is a way of living on earth that is independent of the creator of the earth.

The outward machinery of this system is government, business, and society. The evil spirit in this machinery is the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

This world system is a shadowy counterfeit of God's kingdom. Satan, through his union with fallen man, constructed a system that emphasizes man's physical need and suppresses man's spiritual need. It mocks, scorns, and ridicules the spiritual man, but it esteems and lifts those whose goal is self-provision, self-protection, and self-promotion.

How did Jesus overcome this world system? He overcame by living in direct contradiction to it. Notice how when crowds wanted to make Jesus a king he would evade them and disappear from the scene? Notice how he told his disciples to keep quiet about who he was. He told the people he healed to keep it quiet. Why? Because miracles make a man famous. They give a man a big name. Miracles are good public relations. However, Jesus walked in contradiction to this. He walked in opposition to the principles of the world system.

Then he took the authority his Father gave him and laid down his life. He died on a cross. He gave himself for us. This is completely anti-world system. The law of the world system is to love self, provide for self, and protect self. Yet we see the Lord Jesus died and gave himself so others could live. He died so we could live. He overcame the world and destroyed the work of Satan.

There is much more in the gospel than forgiveness of sins. He is the Lamb slain so our sins could be washed away. He also gave himself so we could be delivered from this present evil world system.

How are we delivered from this present evil world system? We are delivered in the same way we receive forgiveness of sins. We put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As we gaze on him and look on him we are conformed to him. The more we become like him the less the world has power over us. We no longer live for self. As we die to sin and live for God we are set free from the principles of the world system which is self-worship.

When we died with Christ we lost our self-life. Therefore the power of sin no more has power over us. The law of sin controls someone enslaved to self-love. When we die to self we are no longer under the dominion of sin, the world system, or the devil.

Now we belong to God. He is our provider, he is our protector, and he is our portion. He is our reward. He is all we need for this life and the next.

Jesus did all this according to the will of God. God's will for us is the same as it was for the Lord Jesus. We lay down our lives so other people can hear the gospel, and believe, and be saved. We lay down our lives so others can be delivered from this present evil world system.

1:6-7

Paul was astonished at what happened to the Galatians. He heard they had removed themselves from the Lord. They turned their back on the gospel. They stopped embracing the gospel Paul preached. When we stop believing the gospel it is not just intellectual. It is not just religious. It is personal.

How is it personal when someone turns his back on the gospel? Because of the price that was paid. The Lord Jesus gave his life on the cross for us. To turn away from this gospel of the Lord Jesus is to make a personal attack on the Lord Jesus. It is personal. We cannot separate the gospel from the Lord Jesus. We cannot separate the Bible from faith in Jesus.

Not only did they remove themselves from him, the Lord Jesus, but they did so "soon". This was a quick move. They did not allow themselves time to consider their actions but soon removed themselves. They moved with haste and with no thought to turn their back on the gospel and remove themselves from a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

How did they turn their back on Jesus? They probably did not think of it that way. We never stop to consider that if we embrace a philosophy or system or program or religion that we are in essence rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't consider our actions in that light. Instead, we pride ourselves on being open-minded and international in our embrace of other cultures and religions. We are so full of pride and love for our ourselves. We have slapped the Lord Jesus in the face. We pulled out his beard. We screamed "crucify him!"

Rejecting the gospel is personal to the Lord Jesus Christ. Replacing God's word with philosophy, psychology, or religious systems is rejecting the gospel. Replacement is rejection. Adding to the gospel is rejecting the gospel. Adding a program to faith in Jesus is rejection of Jesus.

Jesus does not want us to follow a system, a religion, or any steps of self-improvement. We do not need to save ourselves. Jesus did it all when he died on the cross, and was buried, and rose again the third day. He did it all.

This new gospel is not a gospel at all. It is not good news to hear that we have to work at saving ourselves. This is not good news. It is not good news to find out that I just need faith in self or need to love myself to overcome my problems. This is not good news. Why? Because I am not worthy. I am a sinner. I am an evil person, and so is everyone walking on this earth. Evil to the bone. There is only one who is worthy and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not good news to hear I have to follow religious steps of self-improvement. It is not good news to hear that I have to tell other people my problems when they have the same or worse problems. That is not good news because they cannot help me. They cannot help me and they cannot help themselves. Putting us together in a group will not help us. It will only change us into something worse.

What is worse than being an alcoholic or a drug addict? It is worse when we codify and embrace self-love and self-worship. In essence, we cast ourselves into concrete in the embrace of the serpent. We make an agreement with other people that we will hold hands and reject the gospel of Jesus Christ. We reject God's free gift of eternal life through his son Jesus Christ. Instead, we adopted another gospel of believing in ourselves, loving our selves, and confessing our sins to people instead of to the only one who can forgive our sins.

The only one who can forgive us is the one who died for us on a cross. No one else can help us. People might make us feel good for a while. They might ease our conscience for a while. But the price we pay is to walk into a darkness that we will never find our way back out from again.

There is only one gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. All other religions, philosophies, psychology, science, and programs are man-made lies of the devil.

1:8-9

Paul pronounced a double curse on anyone who preached another gospel than the one he preached. This might sound like Paul had no love for people when he said this. Paul's love was for the people who would be potentially deceived by a false gospel. It is not enough for Paul to warn people against listening to false gospels but he called on God to curse those who brought a false gospel. Notice it was not only a curse on the false gospel but on the messengers of the false gospel. Those who deceive others with false teaching, false doctrine, and a false gospel will suffer the consequences of their deception.

I cannot read this without thinking about Mormons. This verse points directly at this modern false gospel which even boasts itself that it is "another gospel". God's curse is on the false gospel of the Mormons and it is also on anyone who promotes that false gospel. We should pity those young people who are deceived into riding bicycles through neighborhoods and knocking on doors. We should pity them because they are under the curse of God for spreading a false gospel.

This is a good reason to make sure we stay within the boundaries of the gospel and not stray away. It is dangerous for Christians to preach politics from a pulpit. This is dangerous because social issues, politics, and these topics will not save anyone.

These things have their place, but for the preacher of the gospel it is best to stick with the gospel. We are called to teach and preach the word of God. Jesus said if we abide in his word then we will know the truth and the truth will set us free. Truth cannot be found in social causes or politics. That way leads only to confusion, pride, and anger. That path leads us into strife, division, and being confounded.

The kingdoms of this present evil world belong to the devil. Our citizenship is in heaven. We need to focus on what is eternal and not what is temporary.

The most loving thing Paul could do in this situation is to call for a curse on this false gospel and the false messengers.

1:10

Why can't Paul please men and please God at the same time? In the gospel there can be no compromise. We must present the message God gave us. It is God's gospel that is his power to save men.

This brings up the topic of man-pleasers. Why do men want to please men rather than God? A basic reason is that God is invisible and men are not. It is easier to accommodate what we see, hear, feel, taste, or touch. It is easier to live by the five senses rather than by faith. It is more difficult to walk by faith than it is to walk by sight. However, the consequences are worse for those who are men pleasers.

What is a man-pleaser? In the context of the gospel a man-pleaser is someone who changes the gospel message to accommodate man's pride and vanity.

A man pleasing gospel will focus on the here and now rather than what is eternal. A man pleasing gospel will give instructions for men on how to improve their life in this evil world system. It will teach men how to be successful and how to be happy. It will teach men how to succeed in the world. It will teach men how to make a name for themselves. It will teach men how to be proud of themselves. It will teach men how to be self reliant and love self.

As we see in Galatians the false gospel creeping into the church compromised with the Jewish religion. Men taught their own traditions based on the law of Moses. The purpose was to make a name for self and bring people under the control of religious leaders. This was the situation when the Lord Jesus appeared and rebuked the religious leaders. Why did they want to kill him? Why did his presence create this hatred that resulted in murder?

The gospel sets men free from religion. It sets men free from rules and laws. It sets men free so they can serve God in the power of the Holy Spirit. However, the cost of living in the Spirit is losing control of one's own life. A man can no longer be in control. He must surrender control of his life to the Holy Spirit. Man is no longer at the center of his life. Now the Lord Jesus is at the center. Jesus is the ruler of his life. This does not sit well with men. Men do not want the Lord Jesus to rule their lives.

They don't mind religion. Religion can be molded into the image of man and used to control people. But the Lord Jesus cannot be controlled. The Holy Spirit cannot be boxed, categorized, and controlled. If man cannot control something he doesn't want anything to do with it.

The gospel of Jesus Christ pleases God but it does not please men. Those who preach the gospel will always be opposed by the world system and the religious system. There is no getting around this.

Paul said if he pleased men he would not be a servant of Christ. Anyone who is interested in serving God in ministry must overcome the fear of man and the tendency to be man-pleasers.

1:11-12

Certify! We have a certificate of authenticity from Paul and from the Holy Spirit that the gospel Paul preached was not from man and Paul did not learn it from man but received it from the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus taught Paul through revelation. We think of John as the one who saw the revelation of Jesus Christ but Paul also received revelation from Jesus Christ.

Even though men have a Bible they cannot know God except by revelation. We can read the Bible all day and not comprehend it unless the Holy Spirit opens our understanding. We need to pray for the Holy Spirit to give us revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without revelation from God we cannot understand the things which are given to us by God.

We know the reason Paul stressed the divine origin of the gospel was because he was attacked and there was an attempt by false teachers to subvert the gospel. The letter to the Galatians was Paul's defense against this false gospel.

The gospel is from the Lord Jesus. This message was outlined as the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why is this message important? Because through faith in the work of Christ a man receives eternal life. It is through faith in what Christ accomplished that we

receive eternal life. He who has the Son of God has life, and he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. Unless we have faith in Jesus alone we cannot be saved. We cannot confess Christ and other religions or philosophies. We cannot hold the religions of the world and hold the gospel at the same time. The longer we hold the gospel the clearer this becomes. The gospel is completely opposed to all the religions of the world. It is in direct contradiction to idolatry.

There is no compromise between the gospel and the religions of the world. The specific battle which Paul faced in this letter was against Jewish traditions and legalism. The principle holds true for us today against any form of religion or philosophy which exalts itself against the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:13-24

Paul's "conversation in time past" pointed to his lifestyle before he was a Christian. Before he was saved Paul was a persecutor of Christians. His history can be traced in the book of Acts. Paul covered his history with the Galatians for a reason. He tried explain that what he preached was not something he learned in his past as a Pharisee. It was not something he learned from man. He went into detail to provide his personal history after the Lord Jesus saved him on the road to Damascus. After Paul was saved he didn't go to Jerusalem. People were scared of Saul of Tarsus for good reason. Saul of Tarsus was at the execution of Stephen. Paul went to the desert of Arabia. While he was there in isolation for three years the Lord Jesus taught him. The Lord taught Paul the gospel and everything we read about in his letters.

It was important for Paul to share these details so the Galatians would understand Paul was not an apostle sent by man. He was an apostle sent by God. If a man is sent by God we should receive him as a messenger from God.

Most people do not receive someone unless that person has a big name. A big name means the person has fame, or credentials, or graduated from an institution. In the world these things make a difference. In the true church of Jesus not so much. People practice in the church what they see in the world. They think leaders in the church should be appointed like people in business or how government appoints people into leadership. They think leaders should have certificates and titles. They think church leaders should have big names and be important so people will follow them.

This is not the true church of Jesus. The true church follows the Lord Jesus because they love him. Men who serve the church are leaders because of love and humility. They teach others to be like Christ by example, actions, attitudes, and words. Our teaching is the overflow of a life surrendered to the Lord Jesus.

I've heard people say God chose Paul because he was educated in Jewish theology and that he would make a good teacher of the gospel. That is not the truth. Paul said God chose people not because of their strength or intelligence. Read 1 Corinthians 1:27-29.

Why did God choose Paul to be an apostle? It was so no one could say they were too far gone for God to forgive and cleanse. God chose Paul because he was one of the worst men anyone could think of. He was a murderer and a religious hypocrite. He was a zealous Pharisee who would have taken part in handing Jesus over to Pilate to be crucified. Read Paul's own words in 1 Timothy 1:12-16.

Paul's Gospel - Galatians 2

2:1-2

Paul continued with details of his biography. The purpose in sharing these details was to demonstrate that the gospel was not taught to him by man. He did not receive the gospel from man, but received the gospel by revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's authority in the gospel was important because an attack on God's messenger was an attack on the gospel. Paul needed to present his details in order to verify the gospel was from the Lord.

He covered a lot of his personal life. He skipped ahead fourteen years to his conversion and three years in Arabia. He was now with a ministry team consisting of at least Barnabas and Titus. Paul received a revelation from the Lord instructing him to visit the apostles in Jerusalem. He shared with them the gospel he preached among the Gentiles. This was to confirm that the gospel he received from the Lord Jesus was in fact the same gospel the apostles preached in Jerusalem.

He made his presentation to the apostles in private. He said this was so it could be known that his gospel was the same gospel as the original apostles. In the possibility there was a dispute it was wise to do things like this in private. There was no need to embroil the entire church in some kind of controversy.

We know the brothers in Jerusalem gave Paul the right hand of fellowship. Paul was called by the Lord to take the gospel to the Gentiles. The other apostles primarily stayed within the Jewish world in Jerusalem building the faith of believers.

2:3-5

Paul described the content of "another gospel" which was promoted among the Galatians. This new gospel was a mixture of Christianity and the traditions of Pharisees. These false teachers were trying to mix the old and new. We know from the Lord Jesus that one cannot pour new wine into old wine skins. The gospel could not be contained by Jewish traditions or rules. The church was not a national entity. The promises and boundaries of the church are completely different from what God gave the nation of Israel. We serve the same God. However, there are promises God made to the nation of Israel that he did not make the church. This includes promises pertaining to the physical land of the nation of Israel. Those promises were for natural Israel and not for the church.

The promise given in the garden of Eden that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent is for everyone. In Israel, in the church, and in the kingdom coming soon the gospel is for everyone. This gospel was preached by example in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, there are promises God made to national Israel that are distinct from promises to the church. This does not mean people in Israel were saved in a different manner from those in the church. The spiritual remnant of believers within Israel and the church are saved in the same manner: by faith in the Messiah.

It is difficult to keep these things separate. Some go too far and some do not go far enough in discerning between Israel and the church. Israel, the church, and the kingdom age are periods of time which express God three in one. However, in all of these different days there is still only one people of God who believe the promise of the seed and who have the faith of Abraham. These three are one. God's people are three and one. There are three expressions of God's people, but within those three expressions there are one people who comprise God's remnant.

The problem Paul addressed was the misunderstanding people have between Israel and the church. The church does not follow the laws of Moses given to Israel. The Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled this law for us and he nailed it to the cross. He fulfilled it and then it died with him on the cross. When Jesus rose from the dead he was a new creation and those who have faith in him are part of the new creation. They are part of the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven. This new creation cannot be contained by an earthly kingdom. It cannot be contained by any nation. However, Israel was and is and will be God's expression of what a spiritual nation on earth looks like.

The church is not a nation. The church is not a nation in the same way the Holy Spirit is not King Jesus. Distinct. Different. But all part of one which is the one God.

It is a mystery how Israel, the church, and the kingdom fit together in the same way that it is a mystery how God is three in one.

But Paul's gospel to the church was not Judaism. It was not a gospel for Hebrews only. It was also a gospel for Gentiles, and those who believed Paul's gospel did not become Jews. They were a new creation in Christ Jesus. The church is Jews and Gentiles combined into a new man which is not Judaism. It is not the law of Moses. Jesus fulfilled the law. He did what no one could do. He fulfilled the law himself and nailed it to the cross. When Christ died so also did the handwriting of the law which was against us. We are dead to the law that we might live for God now in the power of the Holy Spirit. We do not serve God in the old way of the written law but in the new way of the Holy Spirit.

Circumcision was a sign God first gave to Abraham for his family and this was extended in the law God gave Moses for Israel. When Paul said they did not allow themselves to be circumcised he was making it clear the gospel is not a new form of Judaism.

2:6-10

Paul insisted his ministry to Gentiles and the gospel he preached was not inferior to the gospel entrusted to the original apostles. He said with God there is no respect of persons. Men elevate other men and worship men for the purpose of creating a name independent of God. But God accepts no man's person. Jesus taught if we want to be great, if we want to be somebody, then be a servant of everyone. In the kingdom of God whoever is the least is the greatest. The man who lays down his life and denies his name is the one who is great in God's kingdom.

The apostles acknowledged the gospel Paul preached to the Gentiles was the same message they preached to the Jews. Peter had a ministry primarily to Jewish people. We see Peter in the book of Acts preaching to Gentiles as well. Paul's ministry was primarily to Gentiles though he had a burden for Jewish people.

It is my opinion Paul wrote the letter of Hebrews to the Jewish believers but left out his name because he was not an apostle to Jews but an apostle to Gentiles.

The only request the original apostles gave Paul and his group was to remember the poor. This was also Paul's goal as we see in his letters. In 2 Corinthians we read about Paul's collection for the saints in Jerusalem.

Paul's goal was to defend the gospel which he preached to Gentiles. He was trying to convince the Galatians that his gospel was not inferior to the original apostles. Paul insisted the Lord Jesus taught the gospel to him and the other apostles agreed. They gave him the right hand of fellowship. Paul went to great lengths to prove he was genuine and his gospel was the message from God for salvation.

Paul rebuked other Christians when they mixed Judaism or other religions with the gospel. When anything is taken away from or added to the gospel then it is no longer the gospel. The gospel must be taught completely and defended against wolves in sheep's clothing.

2:11-16

This was a good example of why we need brothers in Christ to help us with blind spots. Each person needs others to help correct our lives. If Peter needed Paul to correct him how much more do we need brothers in the church to correct us when we go astray? It is not **if** but **when** we go astray. Isaiah said *we all like sheep have gone astray and each one turns to his own way*. We need people to have input in our lives to help correct us when we go astray.

What was Paul correcting? The issue was the purity of the gospel. Peter's behavior was grievous because he was an example. If Peter gave in to Jewish legalism and mixed the gospel with tradition it set a precedent. The smallest damage this would cause would be to destroy unity in the church. Remember the church is not just Jewish people who became believers, but it was also Gentiles who came to Christ. If the church became a "Jewish" church then it would exclude people. God told Abraham he would make him a blessing to many nations. The gospel is not just for the Jew but is also for the Gentile. The gospel went first to the Jew. Jesus directed his earthly ministry primarily to the nation of Israel and then after his resurrection it spread rapidly to Gentiles.

Underline the phrase *"knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ...for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified"*

The battle Paul fought was over Christians who became confused about following the law of Moses and the gospel. The gospel means that everyone who believes in the Lord is saved. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord is saved. Those who wanted to mix in the law of Moses said if you were truly a Christian then you were circumcised and kept the Sabbath.

These cults exist today. There are still people who try to mix legalism and Jewish tradition with the gospel. This battle did not end with Paul and the Galatians but continues to plague the church to this hour.

Be steadfast to reject Jewish traditions and Jewish legalism. Along with that we need to recognize how this applies to anything which men try to add or take away from the gospel. We need to discern what is the gospel Paul preached (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), and firmly reject anything men add to the gospel.

2:17-21

The law could only bring death and condemnation. It could not give anyone righteousness or spiritual life. Only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can we receive the gift of righteousness and eternal life. It is by putting our faith in the completed work of the Lord Jesus that we are saved and set free from self, sin, the world, and the devil.

Galatians 2:20 is a Bible verse we should memorize and store in our heart forever. This verse has helped me a lot to understand what the Lord Jesus did for us. Paul said he was crucified with Christ and he no longer lived. What did this mean? In a simple sense this meant Paul no longer lived for himself. His life was dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ. More than that we understand that Christ actually became Paul's life. He no longer lived according to the principles of the world or according to the principles of self-worship. Instead, the Lord became his provider, his protector, and his portion.

Paul concluded that if righteousness came by the law then Christ died in vain. This means that earning our salvation is completely contrary to the gospel Paul preached. Paul preached Christ crucified, dead, buried, and risen again. We no longer live according to the written code of the law. Now we live for God in the power of the Holy Spirit. God gave the Holy Spirit when we believed the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we call on the name of the Lord we receive the Holy Spirit.

Self-righteous religion is the enemy of the gospel. Those who want to earn their way to heaven do not understand the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Justified By Faith - Galatians 3

3:1

These were strong words from Paul. He wondered if they were under a spell that they could not think clearly. The gospel of Jesus Christ was preached to them but now they accepted something else which was not the gospel. They were confused by adding to the gospel. They were mixing the law of Moses with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Someone taught them that in order to remain saved they had to obey the law of Moses. This was a dangerous error because it put them outside the gospel.

The gospel is the finished and completed work of Christ. Men can add nothing to the gospel and they can take nothing away from it. If they add or take away then it is no longer the gospel and those who believe false gospels are not saved.

The Holy Spirit will only honor the work Jesus did. It is only when we abide on the sacred ground of the finished work of Christ that the Holy Spirit will operate in us. If we move away from the gospel we are on our own. The Lord will only work through someone whose heart is fixed on Jesus Christ.

Notice Paul continued to point back to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It is through our faith in the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection that we can truly know God and experience God. We cannot

know the Lord if we pursue him through man-made systems, programs, rituals, or philosophies. We must pursue God only through his Son Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only way to God.

Is it possible for Christians to become bewitched? The enemy is relentless in his attack on Christians and even more the closer to the end we get. As the end approaches the work of the enemy will intensify. We must be on guard. We must meditate and set our heart on the gospel of the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3:2-5

Were we born again by the Holy Spirit or were we born again by striving to obey the ten commandments? Did we get saved by striving to adhere to the law of Moses or did we find eternal life by faith in the gospel?

These questions have a straight forward answer. Of course we were saved by hearing and believing the gospel. We are not saved through striving to obey God's law. The purpose of God's law was to demonstrate how sinful people are. No one can find righteousness through striving to obey the law of Moses. Anyone who attempts to do this shows they are ignorant of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If we started by the Spirit are we sanctified or glorified by the flesh? When Paul mentioned the "flesh" he was pointing to religion which relies on self-effort and self-worship. Anything outside the gospel is "of the flesh". In other words, any substitute religion, philosophy, psychology, or science which subverts, distorts or seeks to replace the gospel is "of the flesh". Anything which is "of the flesh" means that it is man-made. It comes from man; it does not come from God. Man is from below. God is from above. Anything which man comes up with will be of the flesh.

It is amazing that people took God's law and created their own religion from it. They taught men were made righteous by striving to obey God's law. But this is not the way. True righteousness always came by faith in God's Messiah. Those who believe in the "seed of the woman" were counted righteous. Those who are of the faith of Abraham, who believed God's promise, were counted righteous. This righteousness does not come from God's law. This righteousness is a gift from God for every man who believes God's word, God's promise, and God's message of eternal life through his Son Jesus Christ.

Paul indicated the Galatians suffered because of faith in the Lord Jesus. Suffering makes us vulnerable to temptation. They suffered because of their faith in Jesus. They suffered by being outside the social, economic, and protective environment of the synagogue.

Now they were taught a message from false teachers who said Christians could have Jesus and also submit to the religious system. They could have Jesus and submit to the religious system.

Paul made it clear we cannot hold the gospel and submit to man-made religion at the same time. We cannot hold the Holy Spirit and unbelief at the same time. We cannot live for Jesus and live for ourselves at the same time.

Living in the Spirit means dying to self which means we cannot be a part of the worldly principles of the religious system.

The Galatians witnessed miracles at the hands of the apostles. They knew the gospel was true and had experienced the power of the Holy Spirit. Were they now willing to turn back to dead religion so they could escape the suffering of being outside the social and economic protection of the synagogue?

These are questions we must ask ourselves. We must ask if we are prepared to be outside of fellowship with such cults as the emergent church movement? Are we willing to suffer for separating ourselves from the cult of the prosperity movement? Are we prepared to experience the consequences for rebuking the doctrines of demons pouring through the modern day church?

We must do like Paul. We must take our stand against false teaching and false doctrine. We must discern between the gospel and doctrines of demons. If this was a problem in Paul's day it is much more a problem in the church at the end of the age.

3:6-9

The word 'heathen' means Gentile nations. We are brainwashed today that 'heathen' means someone with a bone through their nose living in a jungle. This is not the biblical idea of 'heathen'. The simplest way to understand the word 'heathen' is 'unbeliever', especially nations as a whole who did not know the one true God or the promise of the seed, the Messiah.

The Bible, in the account of Abraham, foretold the gospel traveling from Israel into the whole world. This was exactly what happened. Jesus in his earthly ministry focused primarily on the nation of Israel. However, as he drew close to his death at Calvary we see his intention went beyond Israel. Notice how careful he drew attention to 'heathens' who believed in him. He emphasized the faith of Gentiles, especially in front of his disciples. He drew attention to the faith of Gentiles and how they believed in him.

The gospel is not only a New Testament message. The gospel was preached through the account of Abraham when God said he would bless all nations through Abraham. It would be through Abraham's family that the Messiah would come who would be the Savior of the whole world. Read 1 Timothy 2:3-4.

People miss the point that within the nation of Israel there was only a remnant who continued steadfastly to believe the promise of the Messiah. They understood the purpose of why blood was shed. The animal sacrifices and the blood pointed to the Lamb of God who provided himself as the sacrifice for our sins. John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*" (John 1:29). And he said again in John 1:36, "*And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!*"

Men today in the church who have faith in the Messiah are part of the same remnant which is of the faith of Abraham. These believers are overcomers in Christ Jesus because they stand on the sacred ground of the finished and completed work of Christ. Not everyone in Israel was part of the remnant. Not everyone believed. Just like today not everyone who calls himself a Christian is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not everything which calls itself the church is truly the fellowship of those who are born again by the Holy Spirit.

Righteousness was a gift which God bestowed on Abraham because he believed the word of God. God's word to Abraham involved the seed of the woman, the Messiah, and also involved God's word about a nation through whom this Messiah would come. Through Abraham God chose a man, he chose a family, and he chose a nation. Through this nation came the Messiah who will one day rule all the nations and whose kingdom will endure forever.

3:10-11

Paul quoted Habakkuk 2:4. The just shall live by faith.

This verse tied together Paul's letters in Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. He quoted this verse in each of those letters. It provided an underlying theme pointing to the gospel. No matter what the context or who his hearers were Paul pointed them to the gospel. He pointed to salvation by faith in what the Lord Jesus accomplished in his death, burial, and resurrection. Paul's main defense was against the mixture of Jewish tradition and legalism with the gospel.

Remember in the first chapter of Galatians Paul called down a curse on anyone who preached another gospel? Here he showed us exactly where that curse came from. Anyone who wanted to serve God through attaining righteousness by the works of the law fell under a curse. No one can obey the law of God perfectly. The moment we fail in one point of the law we break all of God's law for God's law is perfectly woven together. A failure in one point is a failure in everything. Therefore we cannot attain righteousness through the law.

No man is justified by the law in the sight of God. Why? Because the just live by faith. God gives the gift of his righteousness to anyone who believes the promise of Messiah Jesus. When we trust in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus at Calvary then we receive the gift of God's righteousness. God is our provider. God is protector. The Lord is our inheritance.

We cannot provide for our own righteousness. We cannot defend ourselves against the accusations of Satan. We do not have to bow down at the altar of unbelief and worship self. Instead, we are set free at Calvary from self, sin, the world, and the devil. The just shall live by faith.

3:12-14

We must get this into our heart. The law is not of faith. If we hear someone from a pulpit preaching that Christians are supposed to follow and obey the ten commandments then we are in the wrong church. We are not supposed to follow the ten commandments. We are supposed to obey the Holy Spirit. We are followers of Jesus Christ and not of religion or written code. We serve God in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

Anyone who lived according to the written code was obligated to do everything in the written code. This is impossible. No man except Jesus Christ ever fulfilled the written code of God's law. If anyone seeks righteousness through following the written code of God's law he falls under a curse. Everyone outside of Jesus Christ is under the curse of God. Men are cursed with physical and spiritual death. We are separated from God.

The only way to be delivered from all curses is through faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ took on himself all the curses when he hung on the cross at Calvary.

As a result of the finished work of Jesus Christ the blessings promised to Abraham came on every man who believed. We now receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. We live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit is believing the gospel. Walking in the flesh is when we no longer believe the gospel but rely on ourselves.

The worship of self results in every sin. Self-worship is Satan worship. To love self supremely is to be one in spirit and principle with the devil.

When we believe in the Lord Jesus then we are set free from the curse of the law. We are set free from the consequences of that curse which is separation from God. To be separated from God is spiritual and physical death.

For those who believe in Jesus we will receive a resurrected body which will never die again. We are raised spiritually to life when we believe the gospel. The Holy Spirit comes and lives in us. We are now the temple of the Holy Spirit.

When a church or ministry focuses on external religion then be careful. It is likely you will find self-worship and a lack of gospel preaching when people focus on external religious rituals.

Jewish tradition and legalism was the problem for the Galatians. For us today there are multiplied different ways the enemy infiltrates the church with false religion, false doctrine, self-worship, covetousness, or just simply getting preachers to neglect the gospel that Jesus died on the cross for us, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

3:15-18

Paul compared God's promises to human covenants. When people make contracts, once it is signed and agreed on, then no one is allowed to invalidate the contract or add something else to the contract.

In the same way, when God made his promise to Abraham concerning Christ then no one could take this away or add anything else to it. Paul made it clear that the promise to Abraham pointed directly to the seed of the woman who is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God's promise made in the garden of Eden after the fall of man. Jesus Christ is God's promise made to Abraham. The law of Moses, which came hundreds of years after Abraham, did not invalidate or nullify God's promise to Abraham.

People mistakenly get the idea that the church invalidates Israel. I can use Paul's argument here to prove this is wrong. Paul made his point that Moses' law does not invalidate God's promise concerning Messiah. On this same basis I can say that God's church existed from the time God made the promise of the seed of the woman. There were always people who believed God's promise of Messiah, and those who believed were, are, and will always be the true church.

Just as the law of Moses did not invalidate God's promise of Messiah, so also our faith in the Messiah does not invalidate God's everlasting covenant with the nation of Israel. There will always be Israel, the church, and the kingdom. These are expressions of who God is. God is three in one. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is prophet, priest, and king. He is expressed through Israel, the church, and the kingdom.

God expresses himself in these three days ("Israel", "Church", and "Kingdom"), and at the end of the third day the New Jerusalem comes down from God out of heaven and all is complete.

The problem Paul was addressing was the basic misunderstanding people had between Israel, the church, and the kingdom. These are distinct and yet one. All of Israel, church, and the kingdom are tied together in the promise God gave Abraham.

The law of Moses, the day of Israel, does not invalidate the promise God gave to Abraham regarding the Messiah. The arrival of the Messiah brought in the second day of God which is the church. The arrival of the church did not invalidate Israel but was the fulfillment of God's promise of the Messiah. The church is not national Israel. God did not make promises of land to the church. But Israel still retains those land promises made to Abraham. I can understand how this is confusing to people. The only way to truly see this is by revelation from the Lord.

The problem in the Galatian church was men who tried to combine Jewish tradition and commandments with the gospel. This is not possible. The laws given to national Israel have no place in the gospel and the promise of the Messiah. Ironically, everything in the Hebrew religious system pointed to the Messiah and the day of the church. And, also, the church is not just Gentiles who believe in Jesus. The church is both Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus the Messiah. The church is Jew and it is Gentile. It is both combined in a new creation in Christ Jesus.

I must say with Paul in Romans 11:33, *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"*

Meditating on the day of Israel and the day of the church makes me wonder what the day of the kingdom will be like. I'm convinced we do not yet have a reference point for understanding what is in front of us in God's kingdom. Just as Israel pointed toward the Messiah and the church so also Israel and the church together point toward something even greater in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3:19-22

There is a lot packed in these verses. Right here Paul gave the reason and purpose God provided the law under Moses. The purpose of the law was to prove to men they were sinners in need of a Savior. God's law demonstrated that the standards of holiness were above and beyond the reach of man.

God's law was not against God's promise. God's law could not provide spiritual life or righteousness to men. It could only point out how desperate men are for God's righteousness.

The scriptures prove all men are under sin. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

The only hope we have now is to believe in God's promise in Jesus Christ. We receive God's promise by faith. We believe God's word. Our only work is to believe in the Son of God Jesus Christ. Jesus is the promised seed. This promise was given by God in Genesis 3:15.

If there had been a law which could have given men spiritual life then righteousness would have been by the law. However, Paul pointed out that righteousness does not come by the law. Men are not made

righteous by striving to obey God's law. Instead, we are made righteous as a gift from God because of what the Lord Jesus accomplished in his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection.

Where does the scripture conclude that all men are under sin? This conclusion can be made by reading the ten commandments God gave Moses. Every man born has broken the first commandment and all of the rest of them as a result. We all have made our own selves a god in the place of the one true God. We all have declared our own selves independent of God by our thoughts, attitudes, agreements, and our actions.

Without the Lord Jesus Christ every man on earth is doomed. Our only hope is to put our faith and our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and our Lord.

3:23-29

Before the appearance of the Messiah God's people had the scriptures which promised the Messiah. They also had God's law. God's law taught people of God's holiness and his perfection. God's law teaches that the Lord is above and we are below. The Lord is from heaven. We are made from the dirt of the earth. God's word shows us we can never cancel our sins through self effort. We could never do enough good works to cancel the sins we have committed. Righteousness before God cannot be attained through striving to obey God's law. When God gave the law and told men to keep it he showed us that the requirements were beyond us. Try your best and follow the ten commandments and you will learn one thing: you are a sinner. The more you strive to obey God's law, the harder you work, the more heinous your sin will appear before you. God's law is a mirror which shows us how filthy and caked in iniquity we are.

How does this help? It helps us because we learn we are sick and need a doctor to heal us. We learn we have a problem that no man on earth can fix. There is no philosophy, religion, or psychology which can fix how broken and messed up we are. There is no program that can solve this problem. Our only hope is outside of our self and outside the reach of mankind.

God's law teaches us we need the Lord Jesus to be our Savior. We need him to be our Lord. Once we put our faith in the Lord Jesus we are immediately liberated from the law and the curse of the law. Our conscience is cleansed by the blood of the Lamb shed on Calvary. There is no more penalty we must pay for our sins because all our sins were paid for on the cross of Calvary. The Lord Jesus bore our sins.

Isaiah 53:6, "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*"

We become children of God by faith in the Lord Jesus. The law did its work by pointing us to the Savior. Now that we have put our faith in the Lord Jesus the work of God's law is finished in us. We are no longer under God's law. We do not need to do anything to prove to God or anyone else that our sins are gone. God himself has wiped away our sins by the sacrifice of his Son Jesus.

Now that we are in Christ we are a new creation. Those who are in Christ no longer find their identity in their gender, or sex, or in their social station. In Christ Jesus we find who we truly are. We are born

again. We are a new creation. We are Christians! We are Abraham's seed and we inherit the promise of God.

Jerusalem From Above - Galatians 4

4:1-5

Paul expanded on his previous statement that the law was a schoolmaster that brought us to Christ. Now he turned the illustration around to focus on those under the schoolmaster. The illustration was of a household where children were raised alongside servants. The child could not do anything more than a servant in the house. He was under a schoolmaster. However, the day would come when he was no longer a child but inherited his full rights as a son.

This was what happened in history. God gave the law to teach men they needed a Savior. At the right time in history the Lord Jesus was born of the virgin Mary. He was born in Israel and under the law of Israel. When he grew up he gave his life at Calvary to redeem Israel and every man who would believe in him. He became the Savior of the world.

The death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus was the end of life under the law of Moses. This does not mean God will not fulfill his promise to Israel as a nation. Paul made this clear in Romans that the Lord is still not finished with Israel as a nation. The names of the twelve tribes are inscribed on the New Jerusalem which will come down out of heaven from God.

The problem Paul addressed in Galatians was that men still attempted to be Jews and added Jesus to the law of Moses. We cannot do that. Jesus fulfilled the law of Moses. He redeemed us from the law so we would no longer be powerless children living with servants. Now we have received the adoption of sons and live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Those who want to live under the law of Moses are carnal and of the flesh. They focus on external, outward religion and rituals. They do this to bring people under control. They do not care about people but they do care about numbers that they bring under their name.

We have been set free by the gospel to serve the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit. We should not go back to legalism and religion but instead live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

4:6-7

Paul told Christians who they were. They were no longer servants in the house of the law. They were no longer servants of Moses and Jewish tradition. This was fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not cancel or do away with the law. Instead, he fulfilled God's law. He fulfilled everything God gave to Moses in the law, the religious ceremony, the covenants, everything! Jesus fulfilled the entire purpose for why God made the nation of Israel. Jesus is the King of the Jews. He is the King of all the nations. He will rule the nations with a rod of iron when he returns.

We are not servants of Moses and the law. We are not under religion or rules or laws. Instead, we are sons and heirs. We are one with the Lord Jesus Christ. This made us heirs and joint-heirs with Jesus. I don't think we comprehend the magnitude of what this means.

When Paul contrasted a son and a servant it was for the purpose of illustration. I've heard people take this out of context and say Christians are not servants. However, Jesus himself said that he did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Christians are servants to other people. We serve one another, we serve in the church, and we serve unbelievers as well. We serve them by being the salt of the earth and the light of the world. However, in the context of Paul's illustration, we are not servants of the law of Moses. We are not servants of Moses. We do not serve the ten commandments. Instead, we serve the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of Jesus now lives in our hearts, and we cry out to God in prayer: "Daddy, Father!" The word Abba is Daddy. This is a word which is emotional. It goes beyond saying "Father", and brings in the aspect of emotional attachment. We are attached to the Lord, not just because of intellectual reasons, but because there is a real attachment to the Lord. He is Abba Father. He is our daddy.

It is much different to have a relationship with God based on love rather than obligation. It is not easier to relate to God on the basis of love but it is different. Paul said the love of Christ constrained him. We are hemmed in behind and before by God's love. We can never escape God's love. Why would we?

When I am filled with the Holy Spirit I automatically cry out to God with "Abba Father". I know he loves me. I can feel it. I am comforted by God's love, I am exhorted by God's love, I am built up by God's love. God's love does not allow me to get away with sin or compromise. It searches my life from head to foot. It searches my heart and mind for unbelief or compromise. I will never get away from the love of God. I don't want to get away from God's love.

He knows everything about me. This is the kind of relationship a son has with his father. He knows me. He knows every detail. I don't understand why he loves me. I don't know why he does, because I am unworthy. However, I know my older brother Jesus died for me and his blood washed away all of my sins.

4:8-11

Before the Gentile Christians heard the gospel they served something Paul said "by nature are no gods". Idols? Statues? They probably bowed to man-made idols or statues. They probably burned incense or put fruit in front of a statue or lit candles at the foot of an idol. Now after they heard the gospel and became Christians they were slipping back into pagan religious activity. What did Paul mean "ye observe days, and months, and times, and years". This probably referred to a system like a horoscope. Or it could be referring to the Jewish system of observing days like the Sabbath, and Passover, and various holidays. However, Paul made it clear that a Christian was not obligated to follow Jewish rules, laws, holidays, or customs. As a matter of fact it is dangerous to follow these things. It breeds self-righteousness and religious pride.

Paul wondered aloud if he had wasted his time with them. They believed the gospel but were easily distracted and deceived by paganism and Jewish legalism. The same is true today. People are distracted by external religion or New Age spirituality. These same doctrines of devils have been around for a long time. Man keeps falling into the same traps of the enemy.

Paul's correction of the Galatians is needed today. We need to examine whether or not we follow religious rituals or do we have a real and intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus. It is not enough to

go through the motions of playing church and having a 15 minute devotion in the morning. Pray to God he would deliver us from the delusion of false spirituality.

4:12-16

Paul persuaded people. He influenced people by appealing to their conscience on the basis of truth. Notice how many times in Paul's letters we see the word "beseech". Paul did not lord his authority as an apostle over people but instead appealed to the conscience. He did this because he trusted the Holy Spirit in people. He trusted the Holy Spirit to help people make the right decision when confronted with truth. Instead of forcing people to submit he pleaded with people to submit to the truth for the sake of the Lord.

What did he mean when he asked them to "be as I am"? How was Paul? Paul believed and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. He determined to know nothing but Christ crucified. He asked them to have the same attitude he did about serving God. Do not serve God in the flesh by following religious rituals. Instead, serve God in the Spirit by believing the gospel.

We can see into Paul's personal life and ministry here. We get a glimpse of what might have been his "thorn in the flesh" which he mentioned in 2 Corinthians. It seemed he might have had a problem with his eye sight. *"Ye would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me."* This seems to indicate Paul was blind or partially blind. Did this vision problem stem from when the Lord Jesus confronted him on the road to Damascus?

The last part of the verse strikes home with me. *"Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"* I've seen this happen in my life with people. Family and close friends turned their back on me when I spoke the truth. I'm not talking about when I gave my opinion, but when I gave the Bible on an issue. People don't want to hear the truth. They would rather live in a fantasy world of lies. It is sad but I have seen it.

I pray to God I will love the truth even if the truth condemns me and breaks me. I want to fall on the rock of Jesus Christ and allow him to break me. Because if I do not submit myself to the truth then one day the truth will fall on me like a stone and grind me to powder. This is what Jesus said. He is the truth. He is that stone. It is better to fall on him than have him fall on you.

Jesus is returning to this earth. His return will be like a stone falling out of a mountain which breaks everything to pieces. He will wreck the nations and establish his kingdom of righteousness forever.

4:17-20

There were false teachers who led the Galatians into legalism. They were taught to have a relationship with God based on the Torah rather than the free gift of God's grace in his son Jesus Christ. Paul said these false teachers influenced the Galatians but not for good. They wanted to exclude the Galatians from the church and bring them into their cult.

Paul was in distress, like a mother giving birth to a child, until he knew they were secure in the faith of the gospel. He wanted to know they were no longer deceived by the false gospel but were secure in their knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul loved them and wanted them to be established on the solid foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of being led astray by false teachers of "Torah" he desired for them to remain in the freedom God gave to us in his son Jesus Christ.

We have good reason to doubt people are saved when they live according to spiritual or moral law. When people put faith in "seed faith" we should have doubts that they know the Lord Jesus. People who live according to a cause and effect relationship in life turn their back on God's grace. God's grace does not work like spiritual law or moral law. If we live according to moral or spiritual law we bring ourselves into bondage to idolatry, covetousness, and the result of that is unbelief and sin.

Instead, we should follow Paul's example of living by grace. Grace does not focus on the cause and effect relationship in life but instead focuses on the Lord Jesus Christ.

4:21-27

Paul used an illustration from the account of Sarah and Hagar to show us the difference between religion and relationship with God. With religion we get bondage and no spiritual life. With a relationship with God by faith we get spiritual life and freedom. Paul associated the gospel with the "Jerusalem which is above". The gospel, and Jesus, and the New Jerusalem are tied together. These are also tied together with the phrase "the faith of Abraham". Remember scripture told us that Abraham was like a stranger and a pilgrim in this world system. He was living for something else which he saw by faith. Read Hebrews 11:8-10.

Some Galatians were ready to turn their back on the gospel and return to Jewish legalism. They wanted to put themselves under the law of Moses. Paul asked them since they wanted to go back under the law did they understand what they were doing? Then he used this account from "the law" to prove his point about the law bringing men under condemnation. Those who are under the law bring themselves under condemnation and spiritual death. The law cannot give spiritual life. The law was put in place because of sin and was to be an instructor pointing us to the Savior Jesus Christ.

These two sons of Abraham illustrate a pattern in the Bible. We often see examples of two men who contrast the flesh and the spirit. We see in the accounts of the patriarchs and their families. There is a brother of the flesh. There is a brother of the spirit. These stand in stark contrast to one another.

This points to the principle of an overcoming remnant within the house of faith. This overcoming remnant are those who walk by faith in God's promise. They abide in the finished work of Jesus Christ. They are not moved away from the gospel. For them the gospel is more than forgiveness of sins. It also means victory over self, sin, the world, and the devil. The overcoming remnant is the brother of the spirit. The lazy, unbelieving man in the house of faith is the brother of the flesh. His mind is on his own self-provision, self-protection, and he is more of a self-worshiper than a worshiper of the one true God.

This same pattern can be seen in the parable of the ten virgins. Five were wise and five were foolish. They were all virgins. This pattern can be seen in the phrase "one was taken, one was left."

We are exhorted to be awake, watching, and praying. We are told to pray that we can be found worthy to *"escape all these things which shall come to pass"*. Why should we be watching, waiting, and

praying unless it will make a difference in whether or not we are raptured or left behind? Let us pray we can be filled with the Spirit and be ready to be caught up together with the Lord.

4:28-31

One point I think is missed here is that both of the sons were of the same family. The brother of the flesh and the brother of the spirit were in the same family. They were in the same house. It is the same in the house of Israel, in the house of the church, and in the house of the kingdom. There are brothers of the flesh and brothers of the spirit. Those who are of the flesh persecute those who are of the spirit.

The first example in the Bible is Cain and Abel. One brother of the flesh and one brother of the spirit. The brother of the flesh persecuted and murdered the brother who walked in the spirit. Nothing has changed. This pattern continues through the Bible and is true today.

The son of the bondwoman, the brother of the flesh, is the one who is cast out by God. He does not inherit the promises of God. He does not inherit the kingdom of God.

People assume because they call themselves Christian or their parents were Christians or because they darken the door of a church that they are good. They think they will inherit the kingdom of God. They won't! They will be left behind. They will be in outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. This doesn't necessarily mean cast into hell. I think people can still be saved as through the fire but not have inheritance in the kingdom. I think this loss of reward and loss of crowns will be enough to cause anguish. Thank God one day the Lord will wipe away all our tears. Every tear will be wiped away, even the tears of loss and regret.

I'm not implying everyone is saved and will go to heaven. The only way a man can be saved is to believe in the Lord Jesus, to call on the name of Jesus, and to believe Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, that he was buried, and that he rose again on the third day. How many people have I known in my life that would profess this and yet their lives were a wreck? I've known many people who called on the name of Jesus but there was no evidence of faith in their lives. I'm not judging them. I do believe everyone who calls on the Lord should consider that we have the judgment of Christ in front of us. This judgment is about rewards and inheritance. This should be taken very seriously.

Those who believe in the gospel and put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are sons of freedom. We are free in Christ. Do not allow yourselves to be entangled by false religion, idolatry, psychology, humanistic ideas, or a worldly attitude. Instead, be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the mind of Jesus Christ. Develop a biblical attitude.

Fruit Of The Spirit - Galatians 5

5:1

The "yoke of bondage" was when people mixed the Jewish traditions with the gospel. The gospel is that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. When men add anything more to this then they dilute the power of God for salvation. To be entangled in a yoke of bondage meant to add or subtract from the gospel.

The successful cults will include some version of the gospel. They will talk about Jesus Christ. They will extol the virtues of Jesus Christ. They will even praise Jesus Christ. But then the penny drops. They teach that you must be baptized or you do not have eternal life. They teach you must keep the Sabbath or you are not a "spiritual" Christian. They introduce the idea of greater and lesser Christians in the church and teach if we do this or that then you are part of the elite Christians.

It is true that within the outward church there is a remnant. But these people are not more spiritual. They are not super Christians. They are not elite. Actually, they are usually the broken ones, the weak ones, and the base ones. All they have is the knowledge that Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. This is what they have. It is all they need. They hold to the gospel, because if God required anything more than faith then they would be lost forever and they know it. Overcomers are not super Christians. They are broken people who believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But cults create a separation between themselves and Christians. They create an attitude of superiority because they don't go to movies, or they don't drink, or they don't eat certain foods. They will create external rules to follow to make themselves superior to other people. They will force their women to wear head coverings. They will force churches to observe certain days or holidays. This is adding to the gospel. All this religious activity brings people into bondage to the flesh and unbelief. It makes people into self-worshippers. It deceives people into thinking that the church is about self-improvement or about living the good life now. This is lies and adding to the gospel.

The gospel is not about being happy or improving your life. The gospel is about dying with Christ, being buried with him, and then being raised by God to walk in the new life of the Holy Spirit.

5:2-4

I had a friend once who said he "fell from grace". During our conversation I learned what he meant by this phrase was that he sinned. He fell into temptation. However, since he was talking to me I knew he repented or had asked forgiveness. So in reality this brother did not "fall from grace". He sinned. There is a remedy for falling into sin. 1 John 1:9. Confess our sins and God will forgive us. Why? Because of the gospel. Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

When Paul said "ye are fallen from grace" he meant something different than falling into sin. He was talking about someone who changed their God. They were no longer putting their faith in the one true God, but now put their faith in God plus their self-effort to save themselves. This does not work. We cannot do enough good works to save ourselves. We cannot do enough good to cancel out the evil in our lives. Even if that were possible we are still sinners by nature. We were born sinners. The only hope we have of entering God's kingdom is to be "born again" by the Holy Spirit.

Falling from grace means we think we can serve God on our own terms. We draw up a contract with God. We strike a deal. We make up rules or we think we can follow rules other men came up with. Following the traditions of men does not commend us to God one bit.

Circumcision was an outward expression of an inward faith that Israel had in God. Circumcision was given to Abraham by God. This was renewed under the law of Moses for Israel. This was an outward sign of their profession of faith.

However, a man could be circumcised and still not believe in God. This is true of people in the church. They can get baptized in water and still not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. People have ulterior motives for going along with religious observance.

Paul said if they wanted to get right with God by circumcision then they were obligated to follow through with obeying all of God's law. Obedience to all of God's law, however, is impossible. We see this over and over in the history of Israel. They constantly went through this process of sinning, confessing, repenting, backsliding, sinning. The law could not save them. It could only condemn them.

The only ones who truly knew God were those who had faith in God's promise of the Messiah. Those who put their faith in the promise God made of the seed. The seed of the woman is the promise that God would destroy the work of the devil through a man.

The work of the devil is to get man to agree with the devil to live in rebellion against God's word. God's work is to destroy this rebellion but he does so through persuading men to voluntarily lay down their arms. We surrender to God when we believe the gospel and put our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. This is the only true surrender. All other forms of surrender are phony and self-made.

The only true way to God is through his son Jesus Christ. We do not find God through striving to obey outward religious rules or laws. We do not know God through the written code of laws. We can only know God by faith in his son Jesus Christ.

5:5-10

One doctrine of these false teachers was that to be a true Christian they had to follow the law of circumcision. Paul contradicted this by saying that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything in relation to salvation. We are not saved by performing outward religious observances. Paul said what really mattered was faith working by love. Faith towards God, expressed through love towards God and our neighbor. Love is the fulfillment of all the laws. Love God. Love people. This is not possible, however, outside the context of faith in the one true God.

Paul compared the doctrine of the false teachers to leaven in bread. It does not take much leaven to change the nature of bread. Jesus compared the teaching of the Pharisees to leaven. Jesus warned his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. We need to be careful what kind of teaching we allow ourselves to be exposed to. Any teaching has the potential to change our lives. Any teaching which is not the gospel of Jesus Christ will change us into the image of the serpent. Anything which is outside the gospel will make us one with the serpent.

The gospel of Jesus Christ makes us one with the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit works in our lives to make us one with the Lord Jesus. Paul warned the Galatians that anyone who brought a false gospel would bear the judgment of God.

5:11-15

The fear of the legalist is that grace will lead people to sin. The opposite is true. It is religious legalism which keeps people in bondage to self-worship, unbelief, and sin.

We are called to freedom in Christ but Paul said we do not use our freedom in Christ to indulge the flesh. Instead we are called to serve. Freedom in Christ is so we can be equipped to serve others in the power of the Holy Spirit. Christian freedom is serving others. The fulfillment of God's law is to love God and to love our neighbor. The fulfillment of God's law is not religious observances such as circumcision or baptism, but instead the fulfillment of God's law is to love the Lord and to love our neighbor.

Our modern culture will even corrupt a concept such as "love thy neighbor as thyself". This modern psychological culture interprets that to mean until you love yourself you cannot love others. Again, the opposite is the truth. We are born loving ourselves. We love ourselves supremely. It is taken for granted in this verse that we love ourselves supremely. Instead, we are called to love others with the same attention we lavish on ourselves.

Corrupt humanistic psychology twists scripture to conform to the satanic goal of self-worship, self-love, and self-image. This is the opposite of the biblical framework of thinking.

The Christian loves the Lord with all of his heart, soul, mind, and strength. He loves his neighbor.

Practicing external religion destroys people. It creates division and strife and people end up devouring one another.

5:16-18

A man walking in the Spirit sticks with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. This gospel is outlined in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. All this is according to scriptures prophesied in the Old Testament.

The gospel is simple but the application is profound and deep. You can read how Paul applied the gospel to the Christian life in Romans chapters 6-8. He outlined how the Christian is not only forgiven but we are made one with the Lord Jesus in death, burial, and resurrection. As a result of this unity with the Lord Jesus we experience power to live a holy life. A holy life is not a sinless, perfect life while we still live in these fallen, human bodies. However, we do experience consistent victory over sin, self, the world, and the enemy.

The "flesh" is a word which pointed to a life of independence from the Holy Spirit. To live according to the flesh means we do not believe the gospel and as a result we produce what is against God's kingdom. Our words, actions, thoughts, and attitudes are against the kingdom of God.

Walking in the Spirit begins, grows, and flourishes in the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit will only honor the finished work of Christ. The Holy Spirit does not honor human strength, human will power, or any vows we make. God will not deal with us according to deals we make on our terms. He only relates with us on the terms he made. Those terms are simple. We can only know him and experience eternal life when we put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

When I was a young Christian I thought walking in the Spirit meant self-discipline. I wanted to be serious all the time and remove myself from all foolishness.

However, if we examine the life of Jesus Christ we see he did not avoid evil people. He met them straight on with the power of the Holy Spirit.

We cannot walk in the Spirit by running away from people or hiding from the world. We walk in the Spirit by believing the gospel and trusting in the Lord to make us holy. My prayer is the Lord will make this temple holy. My prayer is he will continue the good work he started in me so long ago.

When a man walks in the Spirit he is no longer obligated to follow religious rules. You see this clearly in the life of Jesus. He did not feel it necessary to pay attention to religious traditions of the religious leaders in his culture. As a matter of fact, he called them blind leaders of the blind. He warned his disciples to beware of the hypocrisy of religious leaders who burden people with man-made religion, rituals, and traditions.

Let us keep to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our doctrine is Christ Jesus himself. Our doctrine is the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

5:19-21

Here is a list of what it looks like to walk according to the flesh. Walking according to the flesh is as simple as not believing the gospel. When we choose to guide our life according to our own opinion we are automatically living according to the flesh. The result of basing our life on our own independent understanding is outlined for us. When we live for self we will act like this. We will commit adultery and sexual immorality. We will be unclean.

Since we do not believe in the Lord Jesus we will believe in our own self which is idolatry. This leads to manipulating ourselves and other people which is the basis for witchcraft. When people do not bow down to our wishes or opinions we will hate them and strive with them. We will try to dominate other people and bring them under control. This will inevitably lead to wrath which is anger on steroids. This leads to more division from other people and more strife. We will develop patterns of thinking which incorporate religion, psychology, and mass media but blasphemes God because it is a lying, cursed false world view. All of this continues to escalate into murder, drunkenness and a life-long pursuit of escapism through constant stimulation and new experiences. Where does all this lead? It leads to our own spiritual and physical death.

Those who live like this will never inherit anything in God's Kingdom but are shut out from the presence of the Lord. They don't know the Lord in this life and they will only move further away from the Lord in eternity.

God is light and love. What does separation from him mean? It means unending darkness and hatred. What is the practical definition of darkness? It means no clocks, no calendars, no way to tell where you are, no direction, no purpose, only regret and pain and anguish. Is that what you want?

All you need to do to inherit eternal darkness and anguish is reject the gospel. You can pretend to accept the gospel and add to it all your own opinions and cancel out the true gospel as well. Just turn away from the gospel and do your own thing. It is simple to live like this: everyone does.

The Lord gives us a choice. It is also simple to believe the gospel. Even a child can comprehend and believe the good news of Jesus Christ. It is not God's will for anyone to perish but that everyone come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

5:22-26

We are given a list of the results of living for the flesh. Now we can look at this list of the fruit of living in the Spirit. A man who walks in the Spirit has this list of qualities in ever increasing measure in his life. Note, this spiritual fruit is not for the man himself but for those who come into contact with the spiritual man. These qualities help others to understand the gospel and come to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first thing we see in the life of a spiritual man is love. This is not the kind of love we hear the world talking about. To the world and those who reject the gospel this kind of love appears to be hatred. This is how opposite the spiritual man is from the world system and unbelievers. His life seems like hate. It seems like darkness. The world calls what is evil good and they call what is good evil.

This love is different from the world's love. This love exists within the boundaries of holiness, righteousness, and purity. This love is not necessarily an emotion, either. Instead, it is a commitment to the highest good of others and the universe. This is a self-denying, self-sacrificing love. It is mostly unknown in our modern world.

The joy here is also not the joy the world knows. Spiritual joy is consistent despite good or bad circumstances. This joy does not depend on provision or protection. It is a joy which can exist in a prison, or in a concentration camp, as many Christians in the past have demonstrated. This is the joy which comes through obedience and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is what the scriptures call "joy unspeakable". It cannot be described by human words because it is not a joy which comes from man but it is the joy of the Lord. It gives us strength to endure tests, trials, and temptations.

From the fountain of joy comes a stream of peace and patience. We experience peace with God and from this a growing patience with men around us. Since God loved us then the least we can do is be patient with people who harass us. Patience is the fruit of the Spirit. James admonishes us to let patience have her perfect work in us so that we may be complete and entire lacking nothing.

Out of this stream of peace and patience flows a river of gentleness and meekness. As we walk in the Spirit our faith grows more and more.

We cannot create these qualities in our life. We cannot memorize the definitions of these words and hope to make goals to apply these qualities to our life. This fruit comes from the Holy Spirit living within us. Day after day, as we abide in the gospel of Jesus Christ, we will continue to bear the fruit of the Spirit. This fruit is to benefit those whom God wants to reach through us with the good news: Jesus Saves!

Restoring And Helping - Galatians 6

6:1

The letter to the Galatians was Paul's attempt to restore the Galatians to the gospel. He concluded the letter with instructions to restore those who were overtaken. In the context of this letter this would mean those overtaken by a false gospel. Paul said the man who restored others should himself be a spiritual man.

What makes a man spiritual? It does not mean the man is perfect or without flaws. It does, however, point to a man who has a firm grip on the gospel. He should be convinced that his only hope and the only hope anyone has is the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice that spiritual men who restore others should do so with humility. Our attitude when restoring others should be meekness. We should approach things with a humble mind. I have failed many times to deal with people with meekness. Instead, I've been impatient and wanted people to shape up or ship out. Wrong attitude.

Our attitude should be the same as Jesus Christ. Jesus humbled himself. He washed the feet of his disciples. He patiently taught them and instructed them.

Meekness provides the best hope of restoring someone. It is much harder to restore someone if we are impatient or angry. There is a place for correction but within that a person should feel the love of God and our broken heart. We should not attempt to restore someone with an attitude of superiority. This does not help to restore others.

Restoring people is hard work. I know it is because when I was a young man I was in full time ministry helping others with severe life controlling problems. It is hard work to deal with people every day. After awhile I learned the only ones who would change were those who received revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. A program cannot save anyone, but it can provide people with an opportunity to hear the gospel.

We should consider ourselves when helping others. We might start trying to help someone and wind up in the same problem. It is easy to be tempted and thrown off track when serving people. It is easy for the enemy to get us to sin when we are trying to help people. We cannot help others if we are living in sin ourselves. We need to consider ourselves. Are we in sin? Are we compromising? Are we messing up? Only someone who is serious about overcoming problems in their own life can help someone else. I think this is the real meaning behind what Jesus said when he was talking about having a log in our eye and trying to help someone with a speck in their eye.

6:2-5

After exhorting spiritual Christians to restore their fallen brethren we are instructed to bear the burdens of others. What is the law of Christ? This is to love one another. Jesus told his disciples that the world will know that we are Christians by our love for one another. We are to encourage one another, help one another, and lift each other up. If Christians do not help one another then who will?

Pride keeps a man focused on himself and his own needs. He will not take his brother into consideration because he is preoccupied with his own needs, desires, and plans. He is too busy thinking of his own protection and survival to worry about another brother who is suffering. He has enough problems of his own. This is what it looks like when someone thinks himself to be something. When pride is in control it is not the upward glance of the nose but it is rather the constant inward gaze on one's own needs, desires, and pleasures that possess a man.

A humble man is not focused on himself but is focused on serving others. His heart is set on serving the Lord by helping those who are in the church.

We should do our best to bear our own burdens and not ask too much from others. Remember Proverbs 25:17, *"Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbor's house; lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee."* It is wise not to be a burden on others.

6:6

This is a straight forward instruction for people who listen to bible teaching to support bible teaching. If we are blessed spiritually by a church then we should support that church financially. Those who are taught in God's word should share their material resources to make sure that the teaching of God's word may continue. This might be a good argument for tithing, but I don't believe Christians are obligated to pay tithes. I do believe we are obligated to help support the work of God, not only with our attendance but also with our material resources.

There are a lot of Christians who have independent or para-church ministries with their hands out as well. What do we do with that? We must pray and find God's will for what ministries to support. We may only be called to support the local church. We should support our church and Christian fellowship. This does not diminish the need for foreign missions and for support of charitable works around the world.

I've supported ministries in the past which impacted my life. I've always believed as far as I can remember that Christians should love Israel and support evangelism to Jewish people. There are some good ministries out there involved in this work.

There are still places which provide ministry for young men and women who are suffering from drug and alcohol addiction to get their life together in a Christian environment. I can't say I agree with where these ministries have gone as a whole the last few years but I still support the mission of reaching young people with the gospel. Those who struggle with life controlling problems are open to hearing and receiving the gospel of Jesus Christ. These are the people the Lord Jesus reached in his earthly ministry. These are the people the apostle Paul said God calls. (See 1 Corinthians 1:26-28). I would definitely visit a ministry center first before supporting it financially. Talk with students or residents of the ministry to find out the real deal about the ministry.

Any ministry which is reaching people who are in need is a ministry I could get behind as long as they also preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many people claim to preach the gospel but you need to listen to what they are saying to know for sure. Compare what they preach to 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

Let's remember to support those who preach the word. We should be willing to communicate, to share, and to give towards worthy ministries and churches.

6:7-8

There are several warnings against deception, and, of course, the entire letter is a warning not to be deceived by false gospels.

The deception is in thinking God conforms to men. I've heard unrepentant sinners proclaim "God is love" but in their mouth this meant something different than what the Bible teaches. They meant God conforms himself to them and overlooks their sin because he is love. They do not understand the biblical definition of love. God's love does not prevent him from punishing men for their sins. It also means God's holiness does not prevent him from being the one who justifies the wicked. We should never presume we can live in sin and get away with it. We should never assume God will wink at our sins or that we will not suffer consequences for doing our own thing.

If we live according to the flesh then we will suffer for it. We will reap the harvest of sowing to the flesh. Sowing to the flesh, in view of this letter, is turning our back on God's gospel in Jesus Christ and instead thinking we can live for God on our own man-made terms. Men do this all the time. They think as long as they follow "the rules" then God does not see the wickedness, the pride, or the depravity in their heart and thoughts. To think God cannot see us or hear the thought in our heart is, in essence, to mock an all-knowing God. The Lord is omniscient and omnipresent. He never leaves us alone, no matter how we may feel or what we may think. He sees and he hears. When we refuse to bow down and acknowledge our sins the Lord allows the natural progression of those sins to take their course.

We reap what we sow. We harvest what we plant. If we live for self then our reward will be isolation. If we live for the Lord and sow to the Spirit then we will reap the reward of eternal relationship with God. Sowing to the Spirit results in eternal life. Eternal life is simply a relationship with God who gives life, and meaning, and purpose. God is our provider, he is our protector, and he is our portion.

Those who sow to the flesh get their own self as their portion. Those who sow to the Spirit have the Lord as their portion.

My desire is to sow to the Spirit. My goal is to invest in God's kingdom and what counts for eternity. I do not want to deceive myself into sowing what is temporary and passing away. Instead, I want to invest in what will last forever.

6:9

There is danger in becoming tired while doing what is right. Paul would not give this exhortation if there was not a danger of weariness. When a man gets tired he is more tempted to give up. How do we keep ourselves from becoming weary in well doing? Paul gives us one reason right in the next breath: we have hope. We have hope because God is faithful to reward us. God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. At the right time we will receive the return on our investment. However, in order to receive our reward we can't give up. We have to continue. We have to abide. How many times does the Bible talk about "if we continue" or "if we abide" or "if we don't give up". One might be tempted to think salvation is dependent on doing good works. However, salvation and eternal life are not in view. What is in view is reward and inheritance.

We want to receive a harvest for the seeds we planted. Make sure we plant the right seeds, and then don't give up planting those seeds. Don't get tired of planting the good seed. Don't become tired of doing what is right. Let us not become weary in well doing. Why? Because in due season we shall reap a harvest. There is a reward for those who continue to invest in eternity.

I started praying when I was a young Christian that I could invest my time and energy into what would count for eternity. Even with prayers like this I'm afraid of how much time I've wasted and how many opportunities I've let pass me by. The enemy is a determined foe. He wants us to stop believing in God's word and God's promise to us. He wants us to get weary in doing what is right so that we will be cheated out of our reward.

If the enemy cannot steal our salvation then he will work toward denying us any reward when we stand before God.

Revelation 3:11, *"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."*

Why did Jesus exhort us to hold fast so that no man could take our crown? The only explanation is that there is a possibility we can be cheated out of our inheritance in God's kingdom. If we profess Christ but live like the world and waste our lives we will lose our reward. If we become tired of well doing and give up then we will lose the reward which the Lord had for us. The word "crown" represents a reward for our lives. I don't think we meditate on this enough, and let it sink into our heart and mind. We don't want to think about the possibility of running our Christian race in vain. We don't want to think all of our sacrifices in the past were void because we gave up before the finish line.

Do not be weary! Do not give up! Keep sowing the seeds of the gospel. Keep believing the gospel, preaching the gospel, and living the gospel. Read Isaiah 40:29-31. Along with that read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

6:10

Christians should take every opportunity to do good for other people and especially brothers and sisters in Christ.

Doing good requires the Christian to think of others besides himself. This requires humility. Remember, pride as defined in this chapter, is thinking of your own needs and not giving any thought to the needs of others. Humility, however, is displayed by someone who thinks of other people. Humility thinks of the needs of other people, even when one is himself standing in need. Humility puts the needs of others first. This is the example which the Lord Jesus gave us. He put others before himself. Even when he and his disciples were tired and needed rest he did not quit because he was moved with compassion.

There are many opportunities to do good even if this means all we can do is pray and intercede for other people. Consistent intercession for others will help us develop the attitude of Christ. By praying for others we may become the instrument in God's hands to meet the needs of others.

A distinction is made between those in the household of faith. Paul did not say we should ignore those outside the church. We should be ready to help society and do good. However, we should be especially sensitive to the need of brothers and sisters in Christ.

We can do good for our brothers and sisters by not becoming a burden on them. We should seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and trust in the Lord to provide for our needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

Also, if we do have material resources, and are aware of a brother or sister or a Christian family that is need... then, ignore them. Don't call them. Don't reach out to them. Right?

From what I've seen of so-called brothers in Christ that is what we do. But that is not what we do according to scriptures. That is how I know that Christians, at least some who I've encountered, are for the most part ignorant of the Bible. What do they think being a Christian is? Do we think if we spend the night in a garage it makes us a car? If we sit at a table in McDonald's does it turn us into a cheeseburger? Read 1 John 3:17.

Lord, please help me to always be sensitive to the needs of people. Lord, please help me, if I have material resources, to be ready to help my brother and sister in Christ who need help. Lord, help me to always have an open hand and an open heart. Thank you, Father. In Jesus name.

6:11-18

Another reason people gravitate toward religion instead of a relationship with God is because of persecution. The world does not hate religious people. But they do hate someone who has a real relationship with Jesus Christ. They hate born again Christians.

Christians always suffer persecution because of the cross of Christ. Why is this? Because it is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ which seals the fate of all those who hate God. They can never say God is unjust in sending them to a burning lake of fire. All they had to do was believe the gospel. All they had to do was to reject everything in the world except the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is so easy that a child can do it. But when men reject the Lord Jesus and turn away from the gospel they have no excuses left. This is why men hate the cross of Christ. The death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ sealed the fate of Satan and all those who take his side against God.

Those who have been crucified with Christ on the cross are no longer a part of the world system. Now, when they interact with the world system, it is for the purpose of providing the light of the gospel and the salt of God's word. They are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. They do not engage the world system because they are self-worshippers who live for self. They now engage the world because they are ambassadors of Christ and are on a mission to lay down their life so others will be saved as well.

If a man is in Christ Jesus it no longer matters if he is a Jew or a Gentile. It does not matter if he is a man or a woman. It does not matter what race, culture, or language he comes from. If any man is in Christ he is a new creation. He is now a Christian. Christ Jesus defines his life.

Paul was persecuted for the gospel he preached. He bore in his body the evidence of the persecution he endured and suffered. He was a witness of the gospel and did not apologize to anyone. He did not back down but confronted false gospels and false teachers. Why did he do this? Because Paul loved the Lord Jesus and the church. God counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry, to show the world that if a man like Saul of Tarsus could be saved and become an apostle Paul that God can save anyone.

The Lord is ready to save anyone who will turn to him in faith and believe the gospel. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. Believe this in your heart, and confess with your mouth "Jesus Christ is Lord". Call on the name of the Lord! Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Mike Kines
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